

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 17-24 are currently pending in the application; Claims 10-16 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 19 and 24 having been amended in a non-narrowing manner, by way of the present response.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 19 and 20 were objected to because of informalities; Claims 10-14, 17, 18, and 21-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,105,219 to Beadle; Claims 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beadle in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,699,401 to Saenz; and Claims 19, 20 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beadle in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,057,181 to Finnigan.

As stated above, Claims 19 and 20 were objected to because of informalities. In response, Applicants have amended Claim 19 to recite “a set of interlocking teeth.” Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to Claims 19 and 20 be withdrawn.

As stated above Claims 10-14, 17, 18, and 21-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Beadle. Claims 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beadle in view of Saenz. Claims 19, 20 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beadle in view of to Finnigan. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejections of Claims 10-16 have been overcome by the cancellation of the claims without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of the remaining claims be withdrawn for the following reasons.

The present invention is directed to seat belt covers. Independent Claim 17 recites an outside beltlike member having a top end and a bottom end disposed away from the top end along a longitudinal axis, a left beltlike submember, and a right beltlike submember adapted

to form a partially closed volume with the outside beltlike member and the left beltlike submember. The right beltlike submember is connected with the outside beltlike member adjacent the bottom end a first distance from the longitudinal axis and adjacent the top end a second distance from the longitudinal axis, the first distance being greater than the second distance. Independent Claim 21 recites an outside beltlike member having outside top, bottom, connected, and fastening ends, the outside top end disposed away from the outside bottom end, and the outside connected and fastening ends extending between the outside top and bottom ends and disposed away from one another. An inside beltlike member has inside top, bottom, connected, and fastening ends, the inside top end disposed away from the inside bottom end, the inside connected and fastening ends extending between the inside top and bottom ends and disposed away from one another. The inside connected end is connected with the outside connected end. The inside fastening end is adapted to removably fasten with the outside fastening end to form a partially closed volume. A distance between the inside connected and fastening ends adjacent the inside top end is less than a distance between the inside connected and fastening ends adjacent the inside bottom end.

Beadle is directed to a buckle guard. As shown in the figures of Beadle, a buckle guard 10 includes a back guard section, generally designated 12; an inner snap guard section, generally designated 14; and an outer snap guard section, generally designated 16.¹ Back guard section 12 is bendably connected to inner snap guard section 14 and outer snap guard section 16 by two bendable back guard connection portions 20a, 20b positioned midway between back guard section front and back edges 22, 24 and extending out on opposite side edges 26a, 26b thereof.²

Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Beadle. Beadle does not teach the claimed invention of independent Claim 17.

¹ Column 4, lines 50-55.

² Column 4, lines 57-62.

Specifically, Beadle does not teach the claimed features of a right submember connected with an outside member adjacent a bottom end a first distance from a longitudinal axis and adjacent a top end a second distance from the longitudinal axis, the first distance being greater than the second distance, as recited in independent Claim 17. Beadle does not show or state the guard section 14 (e.g., a right submember) connected with the guard section 12 (e.g., an outside member) at a top end (for example, in Figure 2 a leftmost end of the connection 20a) a first distance from a longitudinal axis that is greater than a second distance at a bottom end (for example, in Figure 2 a rightmost end of the connection 20a) of a connection between the guard section 14 and the guard section 12. Rather, the figures of Beadle, including Figure 2, only show that along an entire length of the connection 20a between the guard section 14 and the guard section 12, distances from a longitudinal axis are the same.

Further the seat belt cover of the present invention provides numerous advantages, including advantages that are not provided by Beadle. By way of specific non-limiting examples, Applicants note that the claimed seat belt cover can be movably disposed on a seat belt, such that when the seat belt is unused (e.g., when wound up on a retractor), the claimed cover can receive a through-tongue of the seat belt so that the claimed cover is not disposed between the retractor and the tongue. Thus, the claimed seat belt cover can be prevented from becoming crushed or taking on a bellows-like configuration, and can be prevented from impeding the seat belt from being completely retracted.³ Additionally, Applicants note that Beadle is directed to a buckle guard that is not intended to move on a seat belt, but rather which is intended to remain positioned over and around a buckle assembly to prevent a child from accessing and disconnecting the buckle assembly,⁴ and therefore does not provide these advantages. In fact, when used for its indicated purpose the buckle guard of Beadle is

³ Page 2, lines 11-20, of Applicants' originally filed specification.

⁴ Column 1, lines 62-66.

stationary and covers the buckle of a child's car seat. It is specifically designed to remain over the buckle so a child cannot move it readily. This is not the present invention and cannot suggest the present inventive seat belt cover which, by its very design, must be movable along the seat belt strap. Modifying Beadle to meet the present claimed invention would therefore destroy Beadle's intended purpose and the inventive nature of Beadle's buckle guard.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn and the independent claim allowed.

Claim 21 also stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Beadle. For reasons similar to those discussed above, Beadle does not teach the claimed features of a distance between inside connected and fastening ends adjacent an inside top end of an inside member being less than a distance between the inside connected and fastening ends adjacent an inside bottom end of the inside member, as recited in the independent claim.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn and the independent claim allowed.

Applicants respectfully assert that Claims 18-20 and 22-24 are allowable for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend, as well as for their own features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of dependent Claims 18-20 and 22-24 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a) be withdrawn and the dependent claims allowed.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 17-24 is earnestly solicited.

Application No. 09/938,525

Reply to Office Action of December 29, 2003

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

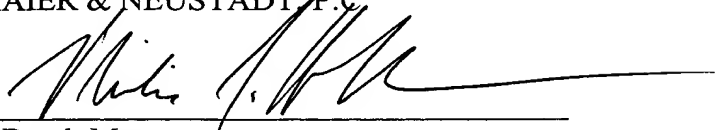
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